

Paper Assignment #1

Choose one of the following questions, and answer it in a paper of 4-5 double spaced pages (no more and no less, please). For each question, select two passages of 5-20 lines each, and closely analyze ('close-read') the passages as a pair in order to make an argument about the particular poem or poems. This will be an extension of nearly all the work you have done in class: I ask general questions and then ask you to use specific supporting evidence from the text in order to answer them. Please choose passages that we have **not** discussed at great length in class, and please include the passages typed out on a separate page that you attach to your paper (i.e. the page w/ the passages on it doesn't count as one of your 4 or 5 pages).

1. In all three of the poems we have read (or are reading, in the case of the Odyssey) so far, there are constant attempts by one character or another to "gain the upper hand" in a given situation (whether that be between gods and gods, gods and mortals, or mortals and mortals). Choose two examples in which the tactics used to do so are either very alike or very different and, through analysis, explain what Homer might be suggesting about why such tactics succeed or fail.
2. Choose two of the three poems and, using two passages for comparison and/or contrast, consider the question of how youthfulness is portrayed in the poem and used by the poet. Some possible directions to take this might be: what are the advantages and disadvantages of being young or being seen as young? Are there significant differences between male youth and female youth, or wartime youth and peacetime youth? Do young characters seem to be given consistent kinds of actions or roles within the larger scheme of the story?
3. Consider the marriages that (arguably) affect these stories most: Helen and Menelaos's and/or Odysseus and Penelope's. Does Homer offer us clues or reasons as to why these people are married, and whether they make good matches? Discuss the effect of these couples' interactions on the poem's portrait of marriage on the whole.

Assignment Two

A Scholarly Conversation

University Writing

Find an exhibit (see note below) that uses the word or concept of “America” or any variation of this word: e.g., “American,” “Americans,” etc. Make a claim about how “America” is being used and what it means in the context of your exhibit. Your argument should offer a close reading of your exhibit that engages the varying positions of 2-4 course readings that explore the meaning of “America.” By orchestrating and contributing to a scholarly conversation surrounding the meaning of “America,” your essay should bring the reader to a new understanding of your exhibit in relation to that conversation.

A note about vocabulary: An “exhibit” can be a text, an event, a performance, a speech, an image, or anything that can be interpreted and carries the potential for rich analysis. We use the term “exhibit” rather than “example” to connote a site of sustained and expansive engagement. While an example merely affirms an argument, an exhibit is dynamic; indeed, the exhibit itself may raise problems with our status quo understanding. Through careful analysis, our developing ideas about the exhibit may change or challenge our initial assumptions. (definition adapted from Sue Mendelsohn)

The paper should be 1500-2000 words long (include a word count at the end of each draft).

Goals:

- Continue to work on the goals from the first assignment: using the **introduction** to orient the reader and identify a textual **problem**; formulating a strong **claim**; establishing a **motive**; maintaining a coherent **structure**; using **evidence** fairly and persuasively.
- Integrate your **sources** with deliberation and purpose. The sources can be used to establish the motive, provide **key terms**, support your claim, or argue with other interpretations. Document sources using the MLA in-text citation method. Include a works cited page. Practice **ICE**: introduce, cite, explain. At least two of the sources should come from the second progression.
- Have **cohesion** and **coherence** in your prose on the sentence level and on the paragraph level. Your diction should be precise. Avoid clichés of language and clichés of thought.
- Have an interesting and informative **title**.